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DE RUEHMN #0171 0891448
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 301448Z MAR 09
FM AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8903

UNCLAS MONTEVIDEO 000171

SIPDIS

WHA/BSC FOR DASCHBACH
DRL/TIP FOR BFLECK

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: PREL PGOV UY
SUBJECT: URUGUAY PROGRESS ON TIP: FIRST PROSECUTIONS BEGIN
UNDER 2008 TIP LAW

¶1. On March 25, two members of a four-member criminal network were criminally charged with trafficking women to Spain. The investigation had previously focused on money laundering and involvement with drug trafficking, but investigators believe they uncovered enough evidence to augment those accusations with a trafficking charge. Although not a new case, this is the first time Uruguay will apply its trafficking in persons law that was enacted in ¶2008.

¶2. The two accused have been in prison since September 2008. The investigation began with the arrest of two women in Montevideo's Carrasco Airport who were carrying over 30,000 euros from drug proceeds. Investigators say that the organization used "mules" to carry cocaine into Spain and Italy and to return with the money. Investigators now believe that the organization also sent between seven and 10 women to Spain to participate in prostitution. Recently returned from the International Law Enforcement Academy training on trafficking in persons (TIP), public prosecutor Adriana di Giavanni sees this case as a powerful example of how the judicial system has the power to identify TIP cases. She stated that she hoped this case would serve as an impetus for a more active approach to identifying and prosecuting TIP.

¶3. Comment: GOU officials rightly see this as an important step in strengthening the fight against TIP, and we believe it demonstrates their commitment to enforce the new sanctions. The GOU has recently increased Uruguayan participation in bilateral and regional training opportunities (e.g. Embassy Montevideo just sent a group of six individuals to the International Law Enforcement Academy in Lima for a TIP course). The GOU recognizes the importance of awareness of human trafficking and the necessity of law enforcement and the judicial system becoming integral elements in its prevention. End comment.

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